



Press Release

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Teenager Suhana Saini aims to make it to senior India TT team this year

New Delhi, February 10: Table Tennis player Suhana Saini, 15, a bronze medallist in the WTT Youth Star Contender (U-19) Tunis last week, has her priorities straight. She is eager to make it to the national team, possibly even before the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in July this year.

“I have just moved up from the U15 to U19 category. I want to get into the top four in world in the U19 category,” Suhana Saini, a Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Development group athlete, told the Sports Authority of India. “And yes, I hope to make it to the senior India team before the Commonwealth Games. There will be nothing like it.”

Suhana Saini topped Group 4 with four successive wins, dropping just two sets on the way to the quarterfinals where she posted a 3-0 victory over Farida Badawy of Egypt. In the closely fought semifinal, the Indian girl won the opening set and fought hard before losing 1-3 to eventual titlist Elena Zaharia (Romania).

The Rohtak-born who trains with former India international R Rajesh in Chennai acknowledges the support from Khelo India and Target Olympic Podium Scheme in her development. “Sports Authority of India has approved our requests to support us to compete in more international events. We’re getting more exposure and getting used to international players. Khelo India Scheme, too, has immensely benefitted me in terms of training, fitness and nutrition. It’s helping a lot,” she said.

Suhana has been binge-watching The Good Doctor after winning the bronze in Tunis but has been mindful of her preparation for her Class 12 exams this year. “Earlier, my goal was to play the State Championship and then the National Championship in my age categories. Then, after winning the National title, I went to compete in international tournaments. Now, I want to get better. Training never stops. I want to compete and win a medal in the Olympic Games,” Suhana Saini said.

Suhana Saini says veteran Table Tennis player A. Sharath Kamal is her role model. “He works so hard even now. In terms of playing, attitude and all, it is just sticking to the routine and following the



process for him. I like Manika [Batra] didi's style and the way she carries herself and her fighting spirit," says the teenager.

"Similarly, it is really motivating to see Payas Jain, who is like my brother. He's really hard working and has the mindset to take on world-beaters. He's never scared of any player. He gives me motivation to treat every opponent like any other player. They are not God or anything!" Suhana Saini added.

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